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Summary

This dissertation with the title 'A new spring and a new sound' is a reception-history research of the reception of Herman Gorters *Mei* in the period 1889-1940. In order to be able to follow the processes of popularisation and canonisation of the poem *Mei* by Herman Gorter during the period 1889-1940, I have investigated the four most important institutions that are involved. These institutions are: 1. a number of daily, weekly and monthly papers; 2. recital-meetings and literary lectures; 3. literary education at secondary schools; 4. the *Mei*-studies.

1. The selected digital files of daily, weekly and monthly papers have been searched for the word 'Gorter'. Doing so the reviews of books of poetry, novels or plays in which the poet Herman Gorter or the poem *Mei* is mentioned were searched for in the first place. I have called these quotations 'mentions 1'. Besides I paid attention to the 'co-mentions', the mentioning of names of poets together with Gorter's name in the same review. This was done in order to investigate what place the reviewers assign Gorter among other poets. For the sake of overview the period of research has been divided into five decennia: 1889-1900, 1901-1910, 1911-1920, 1921-1930 en 1931-1940. My research shows that the poem gets recognition in the literary circuit since 1900. After that the number of mentions rises till the highest number in the period 1931-1940. It can be concluded that in the last period the poem is most popular and gets most recognition.

The second kind of mentions in periodicals are the Gorter-mentions in literary related articles: the mentions 2. In the fourth decennia, 1921-1930, we see a tripling of the number of mentions compared to the previous decade. In the last period there is also a strong increase. This means that the last period has the highest number mentions 2. These mentions show that there is a changing image of the 'Movement-of Eighty' throughout the decades. First there are advocates and opponents but later on there is also reflection on the meaning of 'Eighty' and it is emphasized that The Eighties are the beginning of modern poetry. The third group of mentions, the mentions-3, is formed by the Gorter-mentions in non-literature related articles. There is also a strong increase in these mentions in the 1920s. The increase goes on in the last decade, but less sharp. This study answers the question: to what extent *Mei* was known outside

the literary field. The figures show that in this respect, the popularity of the poem was growing too.

From research on quotations from *Mei* in the periodicals it becomes clear that the first line of the poem is quoted so often that this line was experienced as a set phrase: 'A new spring and a new sound'. Here is also a strong growth in numbers. From the third period, 1921-1930, we see many variations of that line. The first part is used as a set phrase: 'a new sound' as well. From the twenties of last century the first line of the poem was used by retailers in newspaper advertisements. Other quotes of *Mei* can also be found in different magazines in columns, letters to the editor, or used by important speakers or reporters and appear in daily newspapers already at the beginning of the century. The largest number of quotes from *Mei* is to be found in the last period.

2. The second institution is that of the recital-meetings and literary readings. In the late eighties of the nineteenth century a new form of recitation was introduced. This form of reciting was modern because it was not rhetorical, there were no sweeping gestures and no reverberant voice upliftments. It was an intimate recital focused on the performance of personally experienced feelings and this fitted perfectly with the modern, individualistic poetry. Another difference is the fact that this modern way of reciting did not take place in private meetings as chambers of rhetoricians, but in public buildings, accessible for everybody. The largest number of recital meetings took place in the last decade. When the wireless entered many houses in the second half of the twenties, lectures on and recitals of *Mei* were also given by radio. Literary lectures were organized a.o. by the 'Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen' and later on by the 'Volksuniversiteiten', but also on the initiative of publishers. Both the recital meetings as the literary readings have had a considerable share in the process of popularisation and canonisation of *Mei*. Of course the reports and announcements in the daily newspapers have contributed as well.

3. The third institution is education. The first schoolbook for literature education in which *Mei* was mentioned was published in 1899. But it was only in 1908 that some more literature schoolbooks in which Gorter and *Mei* were reviewed, were published. More than ninety literary books have been traced and investigated. In anthologies different 'Mei-fragments' have been taken

down, although the first strophe was quoted most often. In literature reviews the classification of the poem *Mei* was investigated. Nearly always Gorter was considered one of the greatest poets. In some books on literature we don't find a quote of Gorter due to the orthodox Christian view on pedagogical arguments. My conclusion is that books on literature for secondary education have contributed to the popularisation and canonisation of *Mei*.

4. The *Mei*-studies are the fourth institution. Four dissertations about the literary movement of 'De Tachtigers' ('The Eighties') were published. In total 31 'May-studies' have been researched. The interpretations can be divided in four clusters. The biggest cluster is formed by the interpretations that create an antithesis between Balder and Mei. It may be seen as a conflict between the earthly and sensual and the heavenly and spiritual. Albert Verwey was the first one who gave this interpretation in his 'Inleiding tot de nieuwe Nederlandsche dichtkunst'. In the magazine 'De Beweging' he proclaimed a spiritual art that was aimed at a transformation of the first personal impressions of the all-embracing feelings that rise to the all-embracing Idea. Since then the most important poets speak about a transformation process that the perception of reality transforms into a higher, poetic reality, which often creates a metaphysical or universal truth too. Against this background it is to be understood that following interpreters of the poem took this version of Verwey as a starting point for their own interpretation of the poem. The orchestration of Verwey's 'Mei-interpretation' brought on that the opposition of the conflict with the main characters of the poem, 'Mei' and 'Balder', was seen as the most important theme.

Reactions of readers make clear that the poem really brought a renewal in poetry. The renewal did not only consist of another prosody, but especially of an usage that incited feelings and emotions which had not been put into words before and which were recognized as new, modern and matching to a new time first especially by younger people.

The history of appreciation of *Mei* shows that in the beginning the poem was only admired by a small group and was abused by many, but in the end it was recognized as a national inheritance.